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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a study that examined caring as it occurred in both the private and public endeavors of mothers who were studying to become elementary teachers. The study involved interviews with 36 mother-students, informal conversations with 30 respondents, and observations in 30 student teaching classrooms, and 5 observations of university classrooms. Some interviews included family members. Interviews examined the realities of respondents' daily lives. Results indicate that there was a conflict between perceptions of the compatibility of mothering and teaching and the overwhelming dual workload generated as the mother-students shouldered the responsibilities of caring at home and going to school. Respondents revealed the level of organizational effort required to keep their private sphere responsibilities flowing. Both parenting and teaching required high levels of energy. Exhaustion was a hallmark of their experiences. Respondents' responsibilities in the home were more easily adjusted than responsibilities in the public sphere, though they still handled the bulk of domestic responsibilities at home and were ambivalent in working to share the job of caring at home with their husbands. They negotiated very little at school to adjust their workloads. (Contains 44 references.) (SM)

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Revisiting the Work of Caring: Analyzing, Adjusting, and Abstaining

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What we see now is a troubling truth. Motherhood and work life are not like glove in hand. They are more like dog and cat, in conflict... (Roiphe, 1996, p. 235).

Introduction

As feminism winds its way into the new millennium, assumptions abound about US culture having entered an era of postfeminism where women with moxy have achieved equity of opportunity. Perpetuating this perception, Sommers (1995) refuses to consider American women oppressed and claims the feminist movement has been "stolen" by misguided, elitist, white academicians. In a recent article she speaks out about "The War Against Boys" (2000) and claims that girls are the privileged group in schools, and boys are the second sex. Simultaneously, books about the desperate need for women to return to modesty (Shalit, 1999), thus rescuing our nation's youth from a destructively misogynistic culture are reminiscent of 19th century reverence for the doctrine of domesticity and its potential to save the faltering experiment of democracy. Amid such sweeping assessments of what's right and what's wrong in the country's gender arena, gaining clarity on women's place in society today is a challenging pursuit.

An important first step is acknowledging that there are many feminist perspectives. Each provides a different platform from which to view issues of gender. To attempt to clarify women's purported and actual place within a variety of social circumstances without first examining the perspective enabling the point of view is potentially confusing, at best, misleading, at worst. Sommers (1995) identifies her work with liberal feminism and claims to be returning to the work of the founding mothers of feminism, Stanton, Anthony, and the suffragettes of the nineteenth and

early twentieth century. She assails contemporary feminists Gilligan and Pipher, difference feminists, who she believes have wandered from the central issue of legal equality of opportunity for women (2000). Difference feminists (Gilligan 1982; Noddings 1984; Ruddick 1989) have been criticized for essentializing feminine qualities as natural and laudable. But Sommers argument is unrelated to these criticisms. She critiques their research as shoddy and their message as destructive to men and boys.

Add to the conversation the work of popular authors Shalit (1999), Faludi (1991) and Schwartz 1993) and the task of understanding viewpoint and intent becomes even more complex. Shalit believes women must reclaim their lost modesty and look kindly upon notions of masculine protection and chivalry. Faludi examines the "Undeclared War Against American Women" that manifests itself in a cultural backlash following any progress toward gender equity. And Schwarz claims that the second wave of feminism has left young women puzzling over the difficulty of embracing both motherhood and a career without losing themselves. It is clear that Virginia Woolf's (1929) long ago assertion, that women are "...the most discussed animal in the universe," is still true in the year 2000. Gaining clarity on the woman question, is not easy.

There is a pressing need for us to return to the actual experiences of women's lives, listen carefully to their voices, and make connections between their perspectives and the subtextual, power-laden relations of ruling that shape and constrain our possibilities (Smith, 1987). These asymmetrical power relations lie quietly beneath the academic controversies that swirl around the place of women in today's society. Serious investigation must examine the historical and contemporary contexts of gender issues and the outcomes that have resulted from following reasoning that rests on particular feminist platforms that promote a specific view of women. The

current chaotic state of the arguments surrounding women's place in society interfere with serious attempts to create a just and equitable legal and cultural environment

The notion of caring has been commandeered by women arguing for increased opportunity (Willard 1819; Beecher 1869), and by contemporary difference feminists (sometimes referred to as "caring feminists") who use the concept to valorize traditional feminine characteristics. Its malleability and continued use as rallying cry raises questions about its relationship to essentializing women's assumed characteristics in ways that reinforce the sexual division of labor, constrain women's choices and limit women's opportunities in subtle ways (Ehrenreich & English, 1978). This paper attempts to step back from the academic labels of liberal feminism and difference feminism, and to avoid divisive language like war and backlash. It reports the results of a study that begins by examining caring as it occurs in both the private and public endeavors of a group of mothers who were studying to be elementary school teachers. This data became the basis of an analysis of the historical and contemporary material, social context of the work of caring that is shaped by the global sexual division of labor. This focused, contextualized analysis represents a view from the standpoint of women's lives and has implications for individual women, the institution of teacher education, and local and global communities interested in striving toward more equitable opportunities for all.

Methods

Qualitative methods that seek to develop understanding from emergent themes inherent in daily experiences and the perspectives of those who live those experiences were particularly well suited to the aims of this research. Miles and Huberman (1994) comment on the potential of qualitative data to "...focus on naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings, so that we

have a strong handle on what 'real life' is like" (p. 10). Wolcott (1992) contends that all data-gathering techniques employed in qualitative study can be subsumed under three categories of activity: experiencing, enquiring, and examining (p. 39). These apparently common sense definitions can mask the complexity of carrying out an effective qualitative research project (Miles & Huberman, p. 10). Thirty-six interviews were conducted with the mother-students, thirty informal conversations were documented, thirty observations in their student teaching elementary classrooms, and five observations in their university classrooms created the data base for analysis. Some of the interviews included members of their families. The use of these methods allowed a multi-layered analysis that examined first, the realities of women's lives, second, the institution of teacher education that provided the context for many of their experiences, and finally, the gendered social relations that formed a limiting subtext for their lives. These social relations were examined in the light of the global sexual division of labor.

Caring emerged as an issue that was persistently evident in the data that was gathered during the research participants final year in a teacher education programin a large university. The choice of this theme was also shaped by the literature review that exposed caring as an ongoing concern in the discussion of women's place in society. The study used the participants experiences and knowledge as a springboard for the reconceptualization of the work of caring. It also gave voice to a marginalized group within the institutionalized world of teacher education. Because of the shifting demographics of the preservice teacher population, more mothers are returning to school to become certified to carry out the work of caring for and educating children in the public sphere (Su, 1993). Intensification of teachers's workload (Acker, 1987; Apple; 1993; Gitlin, 1983) is a problem for all teachers, but especially for women who are simultaneously

carrying the responsibility for the work of caring for their own children A complex understanding of the work of caring emerged from an examination of that work at all three levels of the analysis. This understanding suggested the need to revisit the work of caring that underscored the need for an ongoing analysis of that work, an adjustment of the responsibility for that work, and the willingness to abstain from that work in a deliberate fashion.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Valorizing difference. Educational literature from feminist philosophers (Grumet, 1987; Martin, 1992; Noddings, 1984, 1992; Ruddick, 1984) has focused on the relationship between mothering/maternal values and teaching/educational values. In so doing, they have valorized the attributes that have been labeled "feminine" and ascribed to women as keepers of the private sphere. Somewhat reminiscent of historical rhetoric that lauded women's natural ability to care as fitting them perfectly for teaching (Beecher, 1837; Mann, 1841; Willard, 1819), these contemporary feminist educators have called for a re-valuing of the feminine qualities women have used to sustain the private sphere activities of our culture. Caring (Noddings), preserving and fostering growth (Ruddick), and "thinking back through our mothers" (Grumet), have been put forward as missing pieces of the educational puzzle. Martin has called for an infusion of care, concern, and connection ("the three Cs"), into the curriculum to compensate for a purported lack of caring and attention in homes where parents are less present than in times past.

Historically, when caring, concern, and connection (Martin, 1992) have been lifted high as educational goals, the burden of implementation has fallen into the laps of women (Grumet, 1988). This valuing of the "feminine" falls short of a truly empowering feminist perspective. Hartsock reminds us that "...feminist theory to date, has for important strategic reasons,

concentrated on the social [rather than natural] aspect [of our embodied experiences]" (1983, p. 284). The idea that women have certain natural abilities has been used to marginalize them economically, socially, and politically. This realization, along with a consideration of worldwide women's issues that challenge the naturalness of white, middle-class, women's abilities, pushes us to think of mothers who are studying to be elementary school teachers differently. Thinking of the category 'woman' as elaborately constructed (Wittig, 1979), can lead us to be less interested in women's gender specific characteristics that might be under-valued and more interested in the socially constructed work expectations that accompany socially constructed 'feminine' attributes. What could we come to understand about the institutionalized systems and structures that surrounded mother-students' lives from attempting to assume their standpoint within the overlapping worlds of teacher education and mothering? How is the lauding of so-called 'feminine' values and attributes related to the oppressive global sexual division of labor?

New sociology: Research for women. To explicate the daily dualism that spirals through the lives of women who are studying to be teachers represents the first half of a sociology for women that is being developed by feminists who claim women's standpoint as a fruitful, even superior site for understanding the social relations in which we unknowingly participate and which we continually, if unwittingly, support with our daily activities (Harding, 1991; Smith 1987). This approach to generating understanding gives the researchers responsibility for creating the opportunity for women to explain the particularities of their daily lives. These particularities are co-ordered with wider structures of power that operate in subtle ways to shape and constrict the choices of women. Smith, taking her cue from the historical materialism of Marx and Engels, refers to this essential location for the initiation of research as "...the local matrices of experiences,

directly known...." It is at these matrices that we discover "...the everyday world as problematic" (Smith, p. 142). Moving beyond an analysis of the goodness of 'feminine' values, this method embraces the need for a feminism that attends to the daily work of caring and the oppression women suffer through the manipulative use of 'feminine' ideals. The lived experience of women in particular contexts is viewed in relation to gendered, global oppression.

Results

The first level of analysis, the daily lives of mother-students, exposed a conflict between their perceptions of the compatibility of mothering and teaching and the overwhelming dual workload that was generated as they shouldered the responsibilities of caring at home and at school. They believed firmly that the commonalities of caring that existed in the public sphere of teaching and the private sphere of home would simplify their lives. The words of Cassie spoken during her first interview, capture a shared perception of five of the six mother-students. "Being a mom influences the way I teach and teaching influences how I am as a mom." Three kinds of perceived compatibility between the roles of mother and teacher were important in varying degrees to these mother students. The first was the belief that their becoming teachers would have a positive influence on their children. The second was their hope that their schedules as teachers and mothers would be compatible. Third, they believed that they could maintain a more cohesive personal identity by choosing to teach school.

Melinda, mother of two pre-schoolers, believed her mothering role had influenced her decision to teach.

> Yes. [Being a mother] definitely played some part in [my decision to become a teacher]....I just started realizing, you know, I already had one child, a second one was on the way, and I wanted to do

> something that was going to benefit them also....I really wanted to do something that is going to benefit them in the home as well as make me happy....But definitely, the mother role definitely had a big part in me deciding to do education.

The anticipation of their becoming teachers affecting their children's lives positively also influenced mother-students' decisions to teach. Rachel, mother of four, was clear about this.

> ...because, really, the career, or the choice of profession, actually is a benefit to my family. I think it's just, you know, there's good things to be modeled....I've learned a ton of things that I can share with them....I do have lots of things through this whole program that are great for my own family.

Both Erica, mother of five and Janice, mother of one grown son, agreed that their identities as nurturing, caring women would allow them to develop a fulfilling career without disturbing a part of their identity that was central to their way of being in the world. Erica spoke eloquently of this hope.

> Teaching will just...glide into my life. I can still be the nurturer, I can still do what I really believe in: helping kids. Whereas if I were [in a business environment] it would just be a constant battle within me, and I couldn't handle that....so where school is work, it feels like it is not going to make me change, you know. I don't have to change who I am. I can still have those deep feelings and emotions. Yeah. Whereas, if I was in a corporate office, I couldn't.

Janice discussed the "naturalness" of the caring role of teacher.

> [Nurturing and caring for the children]...it's just such an integral part of me. And I, you know, there is a nurturing thing...and whether it's a natural thing or just a personality thing, I don't know.

After 23 years of mothering her son, the idea of caring for children in schools was a choice that allowed her to continue that role as nurturer.

But the work of caring at home and at school created an overwhelming set of

responsibilities. As their final year as students drew to a close, all the women expressed apprehension about the realities ahead. They seemed frustrated by the conflict between their hopes and fears. On the one hand, they hoped that they were right about the compatibility of mothering and teaching. They hoped their dreams about meeting the needs of the children in their classrooms could become a reality. They hoped the overlap between the two roles would somehow streamline the double workload they knew could wear them down.

Mother-students were concerned about how they would combine two labor intensive roles successfully. Student teaching confirmed for the women that the life of a dedicated teacher is emotionally and intellectually demanding and enormously time-consuming. They began facing the challenging thought that family time would not be easily maintained as they moved into their full time teaching positions. Rachel, mother of four, had wanted a half-time position but took a full time job when it appeared to be her only option

> And I keep thinking, "I hope this works." Because...what I'm doing is really secondary [to my family]....I just am kind of worried. I really am. I don't want [teaching] to consume my life, but, that's all I've heard. I've heard, "First year teachers– you just wait!" What [my husband] really worries about is that it's gonna consume our lives....and we can't live with that....I guess I'll just have to give it up, basically.

She sums up her internal conflict succinctly. "I want to be a good mother. And, and yet, I want to contribute [to society] in some way....the things I have to offer."

As these mother-students talked their way through the issues generated by the ongoing challenges of balancing their dual roles, they revealed a tension that was never really resolved. A gap existed between their visions of combining mothering and teaching and their daily realities. Adding the work of caring for a classroom full of children to their parenting and domestic

responsibilities within a cultural system that gives them far from sufficient support in their classrooms and virtually complete responsibility for the workload of home left them caught between their hopes and fears. Privately some of the mother-students considered baling out of the public sphere before it had a chance to engulf their lives in ways they were beginning to dread. But mostly they clung to their hopes, believing that their choices were grounded in the realities of their lives.

An examination of the teacher education institution which was the context for these women's preservice teaching experiences provided the data that became the basis for the second level of analysis. Within this teacher education program, the emotional, physical, and intellectual demands of the work of caring associated with teaching and mothering remained invisible. Mothers expressed a concern about not overstepping the bounds of propriety within formal educational settings by sharing too much of the knowledge they had gained from their experiences in the private sphere. Mary discussed this tendency to be reserved about adding her perspective to discussions.

> I share my experiences, I kind of share the insights I feel. But at the same time I'm reluctant to do that too much, because I don't want to sound like somebody who [thinks], "Oh well, I've had kids and I have all the answers." I don't want to sound like that, so there are many times when I'll hold back and am a little reluctant to give a lot of experiences....

Erica mentioned a similar concern in the context of discussing the many connections she makes privately between her mothering and her teacher education experiences.

> I try not to bring my own family into it. ...I do tend to bring a lot of what I learned...when I was a resource aide....And if the teacher is teaching something and I've actually done it I'll say, "Yeah, I've done that and this is what happened with that."....But as far as my

own family, I try not to....

During interviews, Erica articulated many interesting connections she was making between mothering and teaching. Like Mary, she kept much of her privately accumulated knowledge to herself.

Conceptions of elementary school teaching within the teacher education program stood in stark contrast to mother-students' perceptions of the role of elementary school teacher. Notions of professionalism, refining methods appropriate to teaching particular areas of subject matter content, and a determination to ground the practical aspects of teaching in broader theoretical issues provided the framework for the institutionalized process of becoming a certified teacher. The implicit view of teachers embraced by teacher education is one of practitioners who need only think theoretically to inform their content area practice. Mother-students entered the certification program with a view of the role of elementary school teacher that was quite different than the one emphasized within the department. Because these differences were never discussed or analyzed in the light of their larger social implications, they left with little adjustment to their priorities as they moved into their new role.

Mother-students wanted to develop a career that provided continuity between their private and public identities and responsibilities. They wanted to make a contribution beyond their families without losing their ability to keep their families as their top priority. Teacher education institutions fight an ongoing battle to maintain prestige within the university while answering to market forces and attempting to minimize their association with the stigmatized populations of female, mostly working class students and children (Labaree, 1996, pp. 33-34). Discipline-driven professors labored to help preservice teachers become "professionals" who possessed the subject

matter expertise necessary to "reform" the educational experiences of children without troubling subtextual social relations that perpetuate widespread inequity and social oppression. The contrasting goals of mother-students and teacher educators operating in institutionalized settings were developed in relation to unspoken, subtextual, social relations that were the focus of the third level of analysis.

Both locally and globally, women's caring work remains invisible. This invisibility of women's caring labor supports the persistence of asymmetrical power relations. It is informative to consider carefully the seemingly natural division between the public and private spheres of activity and labor that characterizes Western civilization and purports an artificial separation of the public and private lived experiences of mother-students. A thoughtful examination of this public/private divide reveals the importance of gender ideology in legitimizing the conceptual and actual separation between these two spheres. This separation contributes to the maintenance of the privilege of powerful members of society.

While traditional political theory has interpreted the public and private spheres as mutually exclusive and the division between them as unproblematic, feminists have challenged the dichotomy as "...not one between two autonomous, symmetrical and equivalent spheres, but rather a complex relation between domination and subordination, between power and powerlessness" (Bock, 1989). They assert that the separation between the public and the private spheres reinforces the subordination of women and claim that it is linked to particular stages of economic development (Cott, 1977; Mies, 1986).

Schrijvers (1985) uses the concept of marginalization to explain the link between the early stages of capitalism and the deepening of the division between the public and the private spheres.

The shift from an agrarian society with self-contained productive household units to an economic system centered on commercial modes of production and, eventually, industrial capitalism, exacerbates women's dependency and sharpens the differences between the roles of women and men (Cott, 1977). Before the advent of a commercial economy, women in colonial America were subordinate to men, but their work and skills were easily seen as indispensable to the survival of the family. Ehrenreich and English (1978, p. 9) describe the dramatic shift that occurred with "...the triumph of the Market."

> ...the settled patterns of life which defined the Old Order were shattered irrevocably. The old unity of work and home, production and family life, was necessarily and decisively ruptured....Life would now be experienced as divided into two distinct spheres: a 'public' sphere of endeavor governed ultimately by the Market; and a 'private' sphere of intimate relationships and individual biological existence.

Women who did cross the boundary between private and public were kept out of the sectors of the production process that yield power and channeled into the informal and low-paying margins of the market economy (Schrijvers, 1985).

As this shift occurred, women became responsible for the reproductive or domestic labor on which the public 'world of work' depends. Mies (1982) coined the term "housewifization" as a way of linking relations of production with gender ideology. Smith (1987) points out that women are everywhere responsible for facilitating men's occupational work. "Women keep the house, bear and care for the children, look after men when they are sick, and in general provide for the logistics of their bodily existence" (p. 83). This arrangement is dependent upon a socialized ideal of women as housewives and men as breadwinners. In truth, Schrijvers (1985) reminds us, "The actual survival of large categories of the world population is dependent on the

labor of women" (p. 14).

Critical to the maintenance of this contradiction between the ideology of women as provided for and men as providers and the actuality of women's lives is the invisibility of the 'relations of ruling'--the ideologically supported and institutionalized social relations that perpetuate ideas about the natural place of women and men. These social relations legitimate and reinforce gender inequity (p. 3). The pervasive assumption that women and men are biologically and psychologically predisposed to particular kinds of work supports hierarchical, exploitative structures of production that appropriate not only the surplus labor of workers (Marx, Capital, Vol. I., 1974) but reproductive and subsistence labor, carried on predominantly by women, as well. The perceived separation between the public and the private spheres enables and is reinforced by this gendered view of the world.

Mother-students had precious little time to contemplate the implications of their boundary crossing for the stability of a market economy. They negotiated their days admirably and took pleasure in the rewarding relationships that resulted from their work of caring. Given the opportunity to step back from the realities that dominated their time, however, they were able to express dissatisfaction with their work overload and the nagging incongruencies they encountered in their work as preservice teachers. They carried both mental and material aspects of their work across the supposed boundary between the public and private spheres, silently challenging the veracity of capitalism's assumptions.

Implications

Analyzing the Work of Caring

Simply referring to caring as "work" allows questions to be raised about the

reasonableness of the number of responsibilities women handle daily. This study demonstrated the historically persistent, ideological sleight of hand that results from labeling the work of caring as *simply* caring. The voices of mother-students resounded with the strength of the messages of culture that steadily work to maintain the invisibility of the work of caring by naming it relational, natural, and simply--love. Rachel spoke with emotion.

> And maybe it's just [mother's] innate roles. We love our kids....And I think we'd do anything for them. And we'd, we'd like to excel and be the best kind of person we can be, except for that, if our kids don't make it--oh, maaannnn! I can't think of anything worse! If it comes to that, I can postpone [my teaching plans], believe me, I can.

The work of caring that teachers do is also cloaked by the veil of maternal caring. Acker (1996) draws attention to teaching as work. "...an emphasis on teaching as work...speaks to a difference between work and nonwork, the latter associated with the notion of women engaged in natural, quasi-maternal caring" (p. 102). She points out that "The place of caring in teacher's work remains deeply contradictory, simultaneously the moral high ground of the teaching task and a prime site of women's oppression" (p. 124).

Concern for children has been viewed as the reason women are so naturally well-suited to shouldering the responsibilities of mothering and teaching (Beecher, 1837; Mann, 1841; Martin, 1992; Noddings, 1984, 1992; Ruddick, 1989). By labeling this attachment and concern natural, the energy to care is viewed as a by-product of being female. Just as trees produce oxygen effortlessly, women are purported to produce the energy necessary to maintain supportive relationships with children with relative ease. In fact, to do the multifaceted work of caring well requires an immense expenditure of emotional, intellectual, and physical labor.

This assumption that the work of caring will be handled by women who are filling a maternal or quasi-maternal role was clearly understood by mother-students. Erica discussed the work of mothering and her understanding that, in most cases, the buck stops with the mother when it comes to child care responsibilities.

> It's just part of being a mother....It's always the mother who has to worry about the kids and make sure that the kids get to wherever they need to get. You know, if they are sick that they get to the doctor, that they get to the orthodontist....When I was married to my first husband, their dad...he didn't want a whole lot to do with them at all and now, my second husband, I love him and he loves my children totally. But it's still my responsibility. Once in a while he'll do something that will take me by surprise....

Being the person who is ultimately responsible for the welfare of children is emotionally demanding.

It is the emotional dimension of caring that has been highlighted in the messages of mainstream culture. The emotional demands of caring are assumed to be easily met by women at home and in classrooms. Unacknowledged is the fact that the emotional work of caring takes its toll. Ehrensaft (1990) discusses the "sexual division of the psychological labor of parenting" that is likely to drain the emotions of mothers because of its constancy and its invisibility. She asks the question, "Who carries around in their head knowledge of diapers needing to be laundered, fingernails needing to be cut, new clothes needing to be bought?"

Mary expressed a similar conception of the work of caring as emotionally demanding.

> I don't think men can appreciate how many different directions a woman is pulled. That their mind is always on these other problems....men can come home and turn off work, which is fine, I think you should turn off work. But my mind is always, my ear is always open for kids and what's going on, and my husband can sit and read the paper and tune everything out, everything. I don't

> know how he does it. And if I hear "Mom" in the middle of a sentence....And there are the dentist appointments, and the recital coming up, and...

Consider the expression often spoken when limits need to be set within a relationship: "If I didn't care so much, this would be easy." Implicit in this comment is the assertion that caring (or the emotional/psychological labor associated with caring) can be difficult in and of itself. Just as the artist's creative impulses cannot be separated from the demanding intellectual and physical skill required to bring a work of art into being, the emotional impulse to care must be seen as precipitating physical and intellectual demands. Labeling even the emotional dimension of caring as work is the beginning of rethinking the work of caring.

Caring is rarely conceptualized as intellectual activity. This is an egregious omission when teaching and caring are discussed. The work that is the manifestation of a teacher's caring includes connecting multiple areas of curricula with a classroom of diverse children, meeting the extensive institutional requirements for meetings, committees, paperwork, evaluation and grading, communicating effectively with parents, and continually attending classes for professional growth. The intellectual dimension of a teacher's caring requires research, networking for information and support, high levels of creative thinking, strong analytical ability, expert decision-making skill and an enormous level of organizational competence. Ladson-Billings' (1994) summary of the kind of intellectually challenging work carried on by the teachers she observed for her research leaves little doubt about the intellectual rigor required to teach well.

> ...such teachers are identified by their notions of knowledge: They believe that knowledge is continuously re-created, recycled, and shared by students and teachers alike. They view the content of the curriculum critically and are passionate about it. Rather than expecting students to demonstrate prior knowledge and skills they

> help students develop knowledge by building bridges and scaffolding for learning. (p. 25)

Such a description contradicts any failure to view such challenging work as intellectually demanding. Cassie talked about her university work and compared it to her husband's job.

> I don't know if [my husband] realizes that even when I'm not in school, there's a lot of things that my mind is going over. Preparing for a paper, or I'm reading for a class. He doesn't classify school as work....When he goes to work, he goes to work, he works, he comes home. He can usually forget about it....

The work of mothering one or more children effectively requires many of the same intellectually demanding skills. Mother-students revealed the level of organizational effort required to keep their private sphere responsibilities flowing. Additionally, they engaged in complex decision-making regarding the physical, emotional, and social well-being of their children. They negotiated with their children's teachers and care-givers. Their comments disclosed their ongoing insightful reflections about their personal goal-setting and shifting visions of their role as mother. They felt responsible for their children's learning and development. When such tasks are homogeneously characterized as the simple act of caring, the work entailed is devalued and the women doing the work become accustomed to thinking of their responsibilities amorphously as "relational activity," "meeting children's needs," and "preparing children for the future." The intellectual rigor of their work becomes invisible. The labor of teaching and mothering that is engendered by caring deserves recognition as demanding intellectual activity. It is most surely work. Melinda talked about her future as a wife, mother, and schoolteacher realistically.

> ...I know...the workload isn't going to go away....the first year is going to be the toughest...and the each year after that...each

> classroom and each child's going to be different and you're going to have to make it meet their needs....and even with my own kids, as they get older, the workload will still be there, because I keep hearing as they become teenagers (laughter) it's even worse!

The kind of innovative teaching she discussed requires extra preparation and ensures overlap between her public sphere responsibilities and her private sphere time. It is caring, she said, that is at the root of her dedication to teach in this way.

> So caring to me is [what motivates me to do all these things for my students]. Especially, you know...staying up late at night. I cared enough to make these lesson plans good enough for these kids or I never would have stayed up that late at night....

In addition to the emotional and intellectual dimensions of the caring work of mothering and elementary school teaching, both are physically demanding activities. They require high levels of energy and the ability to be on the move most of the time. Teachers and mothers frequently haul supplies, lift children, move furniture, create and continually adjust learning environments. They often are short on sleep and long on to-do lists. This constant stream of physical activity is rationalized by women and those who employ them and depend upon them by the assumption that they expend this kind of physical energy because they care.

Exhaustion was a hallmark of mother-students' experiences. They moved with determination and at a rapid pace. They worried about how their physical strength would be able to sustain them as they took on the tasks of teaching full time in conjunction with their ever present mothering responsibilities. If mother-students occasionally valorized their tiredness, this seemed understandable, albeit counter-productive. There seemed little chance that their workload during this busy year would be noticeably alleviated. Developing a personal identity as a hard-working professional was easier than confronting the structures that kept them breathless, both at

home and at the university. Acknowledging their physical labor as demanding work rather than the concrete manifestation of caring would have renamed their responsibilities in ways that might have enabled n analysis of the work of caring. This analysis of the demanding emotional, intellectual, and physical work of mothering and teaching is a necessary step toward the adjusting of the work of caring.

Adjusting the Work of Caring

Caring at home. Adjusting the work of caring in the private sphere in ways that will bring relief to mothers who are studying to be teachers requires thoughtful negotiation with family members, particularly spouses. These negotiations would need to begin with mother-students' conceptualizing and naming of caring as work and insisting that others see the work of caring as time-consuming, demanding labor that must be included in any decision about the allocation of workload among individuals who share in a family or community. Mother-students reported that they were able to shift some of their workload to their children but found the process of engaging husbands as equal partners in the work of caring difficult. Mary discussed life with her husband and four children.

> [My husband] says, "Just ask me and I'll do it." And I say, "Well, you need to be able to see, you know, you need to take in the big picture."
> That's what I'm trying to change. Basically I've come to understand that I'm in charge of the house and if I want something done I need to assign it or delegate it. And I get tired of being the one who's always in charge and making the decisions and having to see what needs to be done.

Husbands' reluctance to share the work of caring was likely exacerbated by the women's ambivalence about whether the responsibilities associated with their caring really were work.

While laundry, housecleaning, preparing meals and doing dishes were more easily classified as work, attending children's ball games, late night talks with teenagers, and managing a variety of lessons and doctor appointments were less readily called work. This was consonant with Thompson's characterization of "...caring as a cultural ideal [predicated] on the enhancement of emotional service by its separation from domestic dirty work" (1997, p. 332). Mother-students complained about their frantic lives and busy schedules and bemoaned their husbands' lack of participation in the responsibilities of the private sphere. Still, none of the women seemed to have regular discussions about the entire workload of the domestic sphere with their spouses. Negotiation about who would do what and when was intermittent and incomplete. Schwartz (1993) speaks about the larger context of women's reluctance to address their circumstances forthrightly.

> The inability to achieve truthfulness...is inherent in a patriarchal society in which women are assigned total responsibility in one sphere–the home–when in fact real power lies elsewhere....To maintain both their integrity and peace within the family, generations of mothers have been reconciled to the demands and limits put upon them. The anger emerges only erratically, in language difficult to decipher. (p.89)

Mother-students wished their husbands would take in the big picture and assume more responsibility for domestic chores and parenting. But their own reluctance to clearly name the reproductive labor of home as work and their willingness to continue to be the buck-stops-here person in the home, despite extensive responsibilities in the public sphere, left them tired and frustrated. Their attempts at negotiating the distribution of domestic responsibilities fell short of a genuinely helpful reorganization of the work of caring. This failure to name their workload and insist on a more equitable sharing of domestic and parenting responsibilities must not be dismissed

as an easily corrected oversight.

> In a society like ours...women can't afford to get angry at those who hold the power....This anger is...dangerous to express. It's held back because women lack the means to confront it at its source (society) and are dependent on those who may provoke it (men)....[This anger] conflicts with the nurturing and affection that have been the most consistent basis of women's dignity and power. (Schwartz, 1993, pp.89-90)

The absence of paternal intensity on the part of fathers was enabled by mother-students' willingness to assume final responsibility for domestic and parenting labor. How much of their willingness to fill this role was related to their economic dependence on their husbands and possible fear of relational recriminations and how much was the result of their own embracing of cultural norms and ideals is difficult to say. The former seemed to be the foundation on which the latter was constructed.

The economic and sociological complexity of the relations of ruling that weave in and out of the private sphere are elusive and powerful. Mother-students did express some increase in their understanding of their oppressive position within the family as a result of the discussions that were part of this research. How daring they will be in their attempts to unsettle role expectations in the private sphere, given their personal knowledge of their sociological constraints (religious, familial, interpersonal), remains their decision. The view from within they have provided through the telling of their stories reveals some of the complexities and risks they face as a result of the relations of ruling that set limits on their options.

Caring within teacher education. Can the work of caring within teacher education be adjusted? Mother-students' responsibilities in the home were more easily adjusted than responsibilities in the public sphere. Institutional structures, hierarchies of power, and the

generally inflexible nature of public sphere activities meant that when workloads increased, women adjusted their schedules and priorities in the private sphere. Unfinished housework had less serious consequences than an unfinished paper and time was configured less rigidly within the home. Additionally, their commitment to the university certification program was temporary. Expending energy from their already depleted resources to try to adjust a system that they would be leaving at the end of the year may have seemed strategic folly. There was an ongoing reluctance to press against the institutional structures of teacher education.

Like their ambivalence about confronting expectations at home, mother-students' hesitation to share the connections they were making between the work of caring at home and at school in university classes was another instance where failing to identify the work they did as *work* may have interfered with their feeling confident about discussing it and expecting others to acknowledge it. Whether talking about the work of caring and their dual workload would have been well-received in those classes is impossible to say. Perhaps mother-students were correct in their assessment of professors' and classmates' probable lack of readiness to admit private sphere information into the mainstream of preservice teacher education experiences. Whether professors and instructors might have been willing or able (hooks, 1994) to explore the connections mother-students were making as possibly educative and potentially informative remains unknown. Speculating about the possibility of professors or instructors adjusting workloads or redesigning curriculum based on an expanded understanding of the lives of their students is even more difficult.

The view from within available from the mother-students' perspective is one that characterizes the structures and expectations of professors as relatively impenetrable. The

institution of teacher education served as a barrier that masked the expanded relations of ruling that depend on the labor of women to maintain the status quo. The entire system seemed to mother-students to be capriciously insensitive rather than intentionally controlling of the life circumstances of those who participated in the activities that led to teacher certification. By connecting their view with the larger historical processes "...in which we are active and to which we are captive...." (Smith, 1987) the possibility of choosing to act against these relations is created. These connections, however, remained only slightly understood by mother-students.

Limited possibilities. Because mother-students had not carefully analyzed the work they were handling as mothers and preservice teachers, and because they had not labeled many of their responsibilities work, the possibilities for adjusting the work of caring in both the private and the public spheres were limited. At home mother-students continued to handle the bulk of the domestic responsibilities. At the university and in the public school classroom, they strove to meet all requirements and talked little or not at all about negotiating for the adjustment of assignments or refocusing class discussions based on their dual workloads. Despite the fact that they often felt consumed by the work of caring, significantly adjusting the work of caring remained an illusive possibility. Actively abstaining from the work of caring was an even less likely eventuality.

Abstaining from the Work of Caring

Talk of resistance abounds in literature that hopes for transformation and liberation (Ehrensaft, 1990; Giroux, 1983; 1983b; Gitlin, 1994; Trebilcot 1983; Willis, 1977, 1981,1983). Mother-students did not think of resistance to their responsibilities as an option. They felt

trapped. Their husbands took less responsibility for parenting and domestic work than they would have liked. They seemed pleased when their children became more responsible and behaved in supportive and helpful ways. But there was a clear sense that children should only adjust in ways that were beneficial to their growth and development. The idea that they might truly abstain from the work of caring, refuse to be the always giving and available mother, was not even contemplated. Mostly mothers mourned the fact that they did not have more time for the work of caring, despite the fact that their workloads were inequitable and unreasonable. The idea that the refusal to behave in stereotypically caring ways might have positive outcomes received little attention.

Abstaining from some of the emotional, intellectual, and physical work of caring within preservice teacher education contexts seemed even less likely than the possibility of resistance at home. Mother-students' perceptions of their position within the institutional hierarchy was reasonably accurate. They had little power. The possibilities for creating space for negotiation was further limited by their lack of a coherent understanding of institutionalized oppression and their inexperience with any sort of systematic resistance. The energy mother-students expended in the public sphere centered on meeting, not challenging, requirements.

Negotiation for more reasonable expectations would have to have been preceded by mother-students clearly naming the work of caring. Abstaining from complying with unrealistic expectations in relation to the work of caring would have to have been preceded by a willingness on the part of mother-students to resist their own socialized tendencies to adopt cultural norms regarding the needs of children and the work associated with mothering and teaching them. Abstaining would have required pressing against a lifetime of socialization, and was liable to

precipitate unwanted consequences. For these mother-students, the emotional, intellectual, and physical work of caring remained virtually unnamed, mostly unnegotiated, and largely unresisted. Transformation can only occur if oppressive circumstances both at home and in teacher education are named, negotiation toward more equitable sharing of responsibilities occurs, and there is a willingness to resist old patterns and unreasonable expectations.

Conclusion

This assessment of the possibility of these mother-students initiating significant processes of resistance need not be viewed as an analysis of hopelessness. Certainly this research aims to move toward equity and empowerment. The view from within provided by these women can become a chance for women facing the unrealistic demands of the work of caring to understand the contextual social relations that quietly influence their perceptions and the perceptions of those around them. Such understanding coupled with a determination to implement the strategies of continually analyzing, adjusting, and abstaining from unreasonable expectations to do the work of caring might result in some alleviation of their oppressive workload.

But it must be remembered that these women are positioned asymmetrically in power relations both at home and at the university. Acting against their circumstances might even be counter-productive for them. For this reason, the greatest hope for the initiation of significant change, particularly structural change, rests with the more powerful members of the teacher education process. More fully understanding the lives of these women and the work of caring can lead teacher educators to openly acknowledge the caring work associated with teaching and the common circumstance that most of their students are facing now or will face at some time in the future–managing the dual workload of caring in both the private and the public sphere. Open

conversation could lead to a genuine consideration of the importance of communities (teacher education communities, neighborhoods, churches, local civic organizations, local governments, state and federal legislative bodies) analyzing, and adjusting the work of caring together.

Feminist rhetoric that remains focused on the differences between men and women, that valorizes feminine attributions or suggests that schooling experiences should be adjusted according to assumed characteristics of girls and boys unwittingly reinforces rigid gender expectations that maintain asymmetrical power relations and the status quo distribution of privilege and material resources. Genuine school reform focuses on creating classrooms where everyone's needs are met, regardless of race, class, or gender. It looks seriously at material educational opportunities and outcomes. Which groups of students are underserved by existing programs? Whose education is more likely to be supported with scholarship money? Whose education is most likely to bring career opportunities and remuneration commensurate with student achievement? A material feminist perspective that examines the daily experiences of children and the material outcomes of their educational experiences escapes the dangers of theories of difference which have been used historically and continue to be used today to forward the cause of the materially privileged and politically powerful members of society.

Women's place in society remains under debate. One effective way to identify genuinely liberating analyses and proposals is to ask the important questions, "From what platform is this strategist speaking? What view can be had from this standpoint?" If the strategy suggested rests on assumptions about the natural differences between women and men, one might expect, given the history of such arguments, that the rhetoric will mask the reality of the lives of those under discussion. If women are naturally nurturing, and self-sacrificing, their caring labor can be

dismissed as appropriate. From a material feminist perspective, an examination of the lives of these women, exposed the oppressive workload that is rationalized through gendered notions of caring. These same rigid gendered expectations perpetuate indefensible and debilitating expectations in school environments.

The world quietly depends on the caring labor (and other labor) of women. Cummins (1996) reminds us that "...women do between 65 and 75 percent of the world's work and produce 45 percent of the world's food [but] they hold only ten percent of the world's income and one percent of the world's property." Keeping the work of women invisible helps to maintain privilege in our world. Beginning with the experiences of six mothers who were studying to become teachers exposed connections between the gendered expectations of their lives and the exploitation of women's labor in schools and societies. It provided the opportunity to revisit the work of caring as a site of political understanding.

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